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SUBJECT: DFM KARASIN URGES TOUGHER U.S. POSTURE ON GEORGIA

REF: A. MOSCOW 5336
[B.](#) TBILISI 2791

Classified By: A/DCM Alice G. Wells: Reasons 1.4 (b, d).

[¶](#)1. (C) Summary: Prior to Russian Deputy Foreign Minister's November 9 meeting with GOG DFM Vashakidze, the Ambassador reinforced U.S. expectations that Russia would do all it could to de-escalate and calm the situation in Tbilisi. Karasin said the U.S. should not underestimate how upset Russia was over Saakashvili's public accusations, and warned of a "grave danger" of a "sharp decline" in already bad bilateral relations. Karasin agreed that an unstable Georgia was in no one's interest. Both Karasin and the MFA working level reiterated criticism of Georgia's human rights situation and urged a tougher U.S. public message. The Ambassador cautioned that Russia should watch both its actions and rhetoric. End Summary

[¶](#)2. (C) On November 9, the Ambassador described U.S. efforts in Tbilisi to Deputy Foreign Minister Karasin and the strong U.S. expectation that Russia would do all it could to reduce tensions and calm the situation. Karasin expressed appreciation for the Ambassador's preview of DAS Bryza's November 10 travel to Tbilisi. He told the Ambassador that "wiser heads" in the GOR had prevailed and his meeting, scheduled for later the same day, with Georgian DFM Vashakidze would go forward. Karasin cautioned that the USG should not underestimate the degree of GOR anger over "Saakashvili's attempt to blame us for his problems," and warned of the "grave danger" of a "sharp decline" in bilateral relations. The Ambassador noted that Russia had not been blameless on this score -- a charge that Karasin sidestepped. Karasin acknowledged that an unstable Georgia was in no one's interest and expressed hope that early presidential elections and a lifting of the state of emergency would reduce tensions. He urged that DAS Bryza toughen the U.S. public message while in Tbilisi, adding that "firm private messages are not enough right now." The Ambassador responded that U.S. public messages have been direct and consistent, and would remain that way. The Ambassador reiterated that the U.S. expected Russia to watch its own rhetoric, and be careful about its actions as well.

[¶](#)3. (C) In a separate, November 9 meeting, MFA CIS Directorate Deputy Director Aleksey Pavlovskiy charged Tbilisi with re-enacting the events of 2006, which -- in the Russian retelling -- involved "concocting" a spy scandal and arresting a dozen opposition members, in order to influence local elections. Pavlovskiy approvingly quoted a journalist at the November 8 State Department briefing, who suggested that there was too little time for the opposition to prepare for the January 8 election called by President Saakashvili.

[¶](#)4. (C) Reiterating the charges made in previous MFA statements, Pavlovskiy attributed GOG actions to a campaign

to blame Russia for Georgian domestic problems. In a swipe at the U.S., he noted that the GOR "has no dogmas about Georgia, and has no need to embellish what happens there." Pavlovskiy recalled Karasin's earlier letter to U/S Burns contending that recent events once again confirm that Georgia is not a democracy and is not in the process of becoming one.

In violently dispersing demonstrators, President Saakashvili had shown his true face. Only signals from the European Union and NATO had curbed the Georgian President. Pavlovskiy urged the U.S. to publicly criticize the harsh measures employed against demonstrators and the closure of opposition radio station Imedi. If criticism is confined to private meetings with GOG officials, he asserted, the turbulence would continue. Pavlovskiy acknowledged the public U.S. statement calling for an end to the emergency situation and resumption of all media, but argued it fell short of what was necessary to chasten the Georgian leadership.

¶ 5. (C) Pavlovskiy also stressed that the Karasin-Vashakidze meeting had been scheduled before the dispersal of demonstrators. With some hesitation, he said, the GOR had decided to go forward with it in spite of Georgian accusations of an alleged Russian coup plot, the withdrawal of the Georgian Ambassador to Moscow, and the tit-for-tat expulsions that had ensued. Pavlovskiy said that Karasin was prepared for a serious conversation, but was inclined to believe that the visit would be used to provide the appearance of normality to a bilateral relationship that was in fact under strain.

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